



Indiana Department of Education

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

February 26, 2009

Dear Superintendents and Principals:

As you know, this coming Monday (March 2) marks Indiana's official move to spring ISTEP+ testing. The Indiana Department of Education has been communicating regularly with your local test coordinators to ensure this transition goes as smoothly as possible, but I wanted to take this opportunity to share a few key reminders with you and your staff.

Testing Windows

- Unlike the traditional fall ISTEP+, the spring 2009 ISTEP+ will be administered during two testing windows at grades 3-8:
 - **Applied Skills** (writing items) will be given from **March 2 to March 11**.
 - **Multiple Choice** items will be given from **April 27 to May 6**.
- High school students who are retaking the Graduation Qualifying Exam will do so on March 10, 11, 12.

Test Administration

- **Student Test Numbers (STN) are critical:** Every student will have a "March" test and an "April/May" test, and both tests must be matched to produce scores. As such, every test document must have either a barcode label or a correctly bubbled STN.
- **Save testing manuals:** All Examiner and Test Coordinator Manuals cover both test administration periods, so these materials must be kept in a secure location for use in April/May. Schools must also keep the second student barcode label for use on the April/May tests.
- **Flexibility for Limited English Proficient students:** The federal government's "less than one year rule" does apply to the spring ISTEP+, meaning LEP students who first enrolled in U.S. schools after March 1, 2008 may take the alternative LAS-Links assessment in place of English/language arts portion of ISTEP+. These students must take the math, science and social studies ISTEP+ tests based on their grade level placement.
- **Grade 3 test is not "scripted":** Unlike the fall test, the spring test is not broken into small units that the teacher "steps" the students through. The grade 3 ISTEP+ is now like the other grades tested.
- **Grade 6 test includes calculators:** Math "gridded response" items and calculator use begins in grade 6. This will be new for 6th grade teachers, but it is actually the same expectation as when students were tested on grade 6 skills in the fall of grade 7.

Test Results

- Results for GQE retesters will be available on May 8.
- Results for the spring 2009 ISTEP+ will be released in late August after cut (passing) scores are set and adopted by the State Board of Education. Results for each year thereafter will be available to students, parents and educators before the end of the school year.

Questions/Help

- Call 1-888-54-ISTEP or 317-232-9050.
- Visit www.doe.in.gov/istep. See “Student/Parent Resources” and “Educator Resources.”

As part of the transition from fall to spring ISTEP+ testing, Indiana is presented with the unique one-time opportunity to measure actual academic progress since the beginning of this school year. I know educators and parents across the state have been working hard to make sure our students are prepared to do their best. If there is anything my staff can do to help you during this test administration, please do not hesitate to contact us at the numbers provided above.

Sincerely,



Dr. Tony Bennett
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Common questions about ISTEP+

What is ISTEP+?

- The Indiana Statewide Testing for Education Progress-Plus (or ISTEP+) measures what students know and are able to do at each grade level in core academic subjects.
- Based on Indiana's Academic Standards, ISTEP+ provides a learning check-up designed to make sure students are on track and to signal whether they need extra help.

How can students get ready for ISTEP+?

- **Be prepared.** Cramming for any test is never the best way to prepare. Keep up with your homework and ask your teachers for help when you need it.
- **Ask for help.** If you've had trouble with ISTEP+ in the past, ask a teacher, counselor or parent about extra help now.
- **Review.** In the weeks before your test, take it seriously when your teachers review important information.
- **Get plenty of sleep.** Go to bed a little earlier so you get a good night's sleep. Being well rested will give you an extra boost of energy for test day.
- **Have a good breakfast.** Eat protein (eggs, meat, cheese, etc.), which will help you perform better than a sugary doughnut. Too much food can make you feel sleepy, so don't overdo it.
- **Take a break.** Get some exercise during your breaks or after school to keep your energy up.
- **Double-check your work.** Get in the habit now of double-checking your work and proofreading your answers on homework to be ready to find mistakes on test days.

What can parents do to help students prepare for ISTEP+?

- **Stay connected.** Cramming for a test rarely results in the type of learning that will stay with your child throughout his or her life. The best preparation is to provide consistent support for your child throughout his or her education.
- **Know what's expected.** Read Indiana's Academic Standards (www.doe.in.gov/standards) so you know what your child should know and be able to do, reinforce these expectations at home and stay connected to your child's academic performance throughout the year.
- **Check grades.** Your son or daughter may say things are "fine" at school but don't stop checking report cards, progress reports or, if available, your child's online grades or class progress.
- **Talk to the teacher.** Teachers know how hard students are working, how well they are behaving, quality of their homework and what areas need improvement. Collect e-mail addresses or phone numbers of all your child's teachers and check in periodically.
- **Don't buckle on homework.** If your child is not studying at home, ask why, and double-check with teachers. It's tough to hold the line, but making sure your child does his or her homework is important for academic success.
- **Ask for help.** Students who are struggling in a particular class may need extra help after school or with a tutor. Find out from your school where you can go for help and make sure your student gets the help he or she needs. Catching a problem area now can make a big difference.
- **Go to parent meetings.** Most schools offer parent nights or teacher/parent sessions that provide great information. Check your school's calendar at the beginning of the year and plan to attend.
- **Get involved.** Nothing will have a bigger impact on your student's success than your involvement in his or her education.

What if I have more questions about ISTEP+?

- Visit www.doe.in.gov/istep or call 1-888-54-ISTEP.
- Visit www.learnmoreindiana.org or call 1-800-992-2076.